

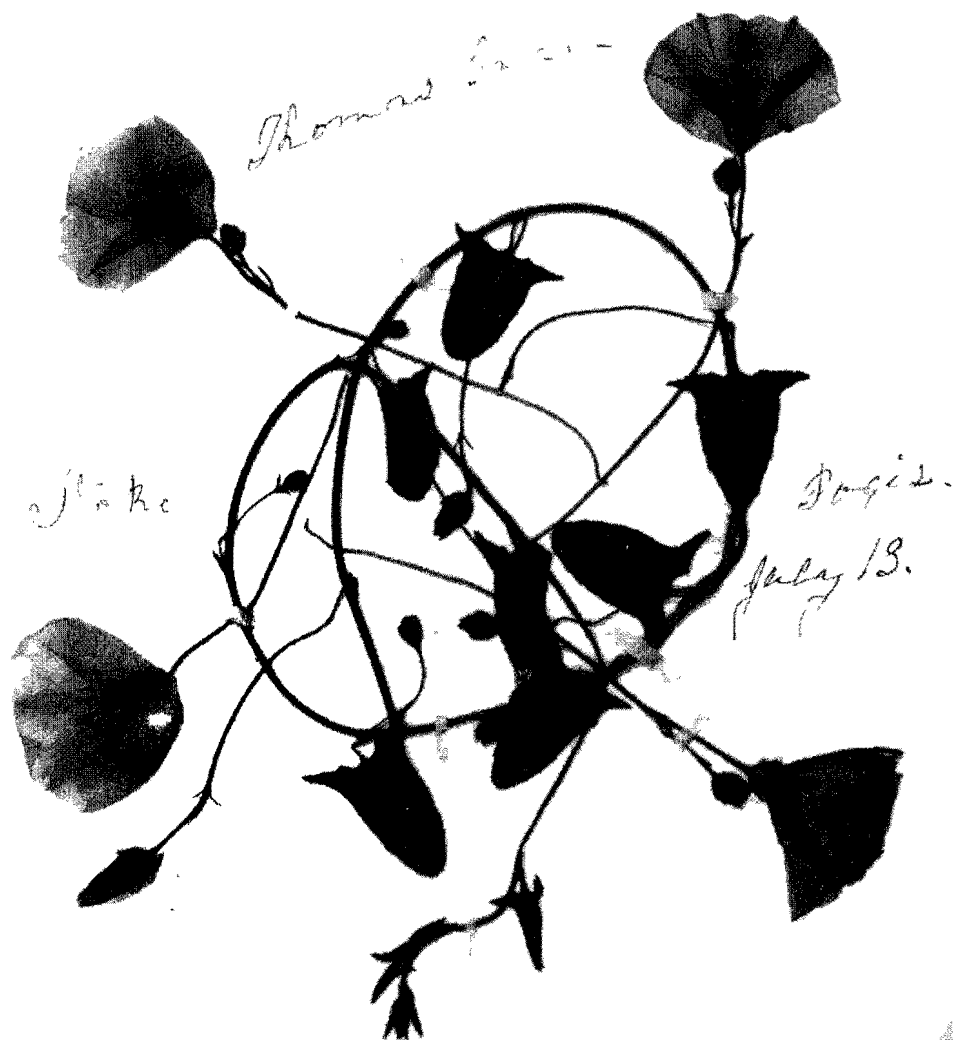
RUTLAND HISTORICAL SOCIETY

Quarterly

VOLUME 47 No. 1

2017

Women Writers of Rutland



RUTLAND HISTORICAL SOCIETY

Pressed Flowers gathered by Julia Dorr from Stoke Pogus while on tour in England. Handwritten notations are Julia's own notes about specifics relating to gathering of the specimen.

About the Author

Stevie Billow, a Rutland native, is a member of the Smith College class of 2019. There, Stevie is a History and Art History double major with a concentration in Museum Studies. An avid writer and lover of history, this is the first quarterly Stevie has written for the Rutland Historical Society. Contact: sfbillow@gmail.com.

Introduction

In spring of 2016, Carolynn Ranftle introduced us to several pertinent, past Rutland residents in the one-hundred and forty-seventh episode of *Historically Speaking* – “Rutland Women in History”. Upon taking on the task of writing a quarterly for the Society, it was this video that inspired me to further investigate the lives of three Rutland women: Julia C.R. Dorr, Edith Kellogg Dunton, and Beth Bradford Gilchrist. Initially, my sole interest in these women was their shared career as writers. Yet, as I learned more about each individual and discovered the nuances of their lives, I learned that all three were far from the stereotypical suppressed woman writers I had imagined. I was awed by Dorr’s fortitude in a male-dominated field. I was surprised by Dunton’s introverted, yet multi-talented and industrious nature. I was charmed by (and maybe somewhat jealous of) Gilchrist’s determination and effortless grace. While this work is primarily a homage to the literary works of these women and their impact on Rutland’s history, it is also a glimpse into the lives of three people worth remembering. One of the most important, yet often overlooked factors in understanding history is to take into account the humanity of those we read about.

A special thanks to Carolynn Ranftle and Lorraine Bargmann for their unwavering support throughout this process.

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Women Writers of Rutland

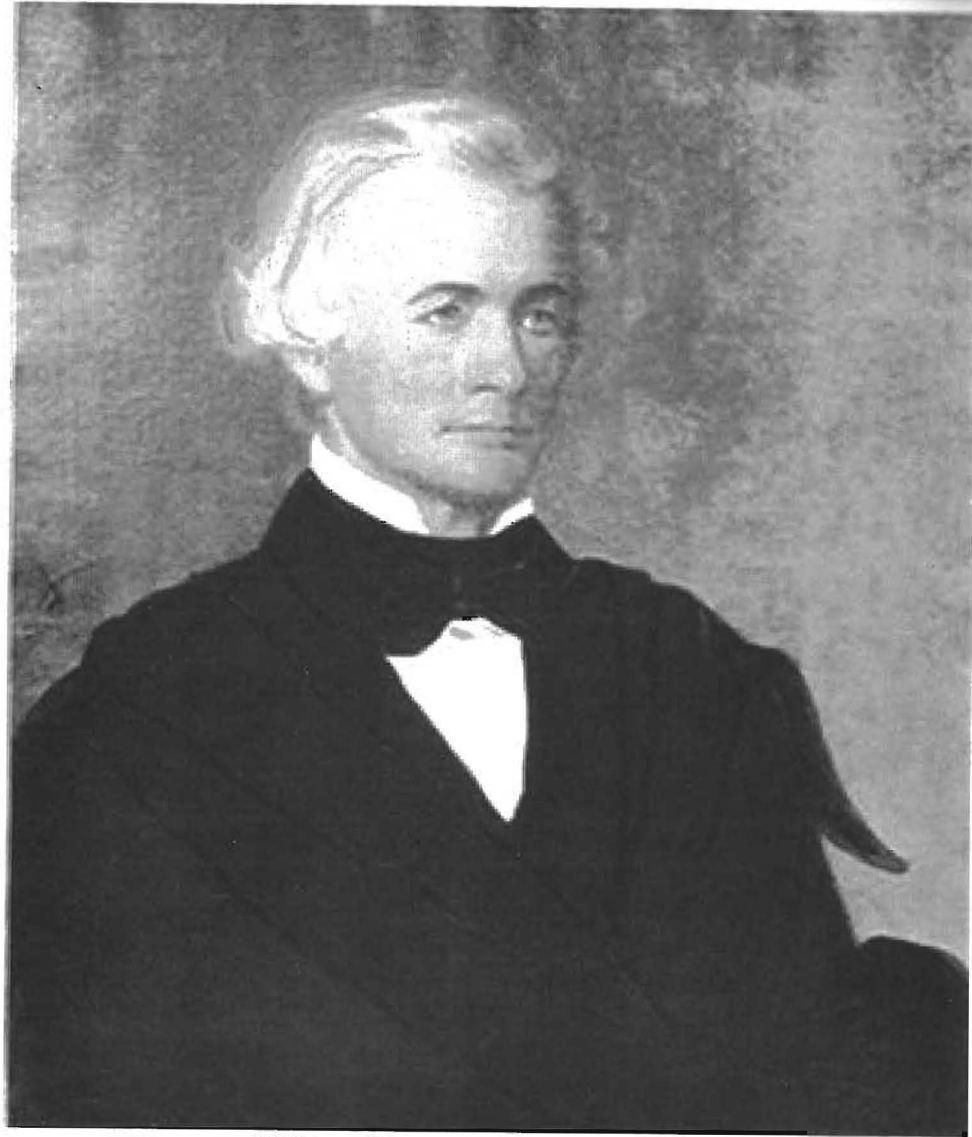
by Stephanie Billow

Julia C.R. Dorr

Family and Early Life

No study of Rutland's literary legacy would be complete without mention of Julia C.R. Dorr. She was born Julia Caroline Ripley in Charleston, South Carolina on February 13, 1825. Charleston was the birthplace of her mother, Zulma Caroline Thomas Ripley, who died when Julia was only eighteen months of age. However her father, William Young Ripley, hailed from Middlebury, Vermont and had established himself as a prominent civic force in Rutland County during the 1800s. Ripley had worked in the mercantile business from a very young age, an occupation which took him from Middlebury to Charleston and later to New York City. By 1830, Ripley was independently wealthy and returned to Middlebury, along with his daughter Julia, to enjoy his retirement at the ripe age of thirty-two. However, Ripley's retirement did not last long and seven years after having settled in Middlebury, Ripley moved to Rutland to undergo several enterprises. During his time in Rutland, Ripley managed the first large, well-organized marble company in the county from 1844 to 1865 (at which point, his three sons from his second marriage to a Middlebury woman took over the business and the company was henceforth known as "Ripley and Sons"). In addition to being a marble mogul, Ripley helped found the Rutland County Bank in 1861 and later served as president. Adjacent from that very bank, Ripley built the Rutland Opera House in 1868 (which tragically burned down in 1875) and focused great philanthropic effort towards the Methodist Troy Conference Academy, which would later be known as the Ripley Female College (today, this institution is Green Mountain College).¹

¹ Purdy, Elaine. "Ripley, William Young", Rutland Historical Society



William Young Ripley (1797-1875)

Julia's early life was greatly influenced by her father's industrious nature and wealth. After her mother's death, Julia was sent to live with a Mrs. Hasting Warren of Middlebury as her father had moved to New York on account of his trade. Two years later, Ripley had moved back to Vermont for his retirement and settled with Julia at a farmhouse near Middlebury. Another subsequent two years later, Julia would find herself older sibling to William Young Warren Ripley, the first child of

William Young Ripley and Jane Betsy Warren Ripley (like many of the Ripleys, William Young Warren would earn his fame through military achievement during the Civil War, for which he earned the Congressional Medal of Honor).

Julia and her many half-siblings would know a life few of Rutland County knew at the time. This was a life brimming with opportunity and grandeur, and most importantly, opened the door to a quality education. Julia spent her youth amongst the tomes of her father's extensive library and began writing poetry from the age of twelve (though she kept this hobby a secret from her family by hiding her poems). Given his dedication to the Ripley Female College, it is clear that Ripley stood as a champion of women's education and this was extended to his daughter, who benefitted not only from extensive tutoring at home, but also from stints in schools such as the Middlebury Female Seminary and the Methodist Troy Conference Academy.²

Literary Career

In 1847, Julia married Seneca Milo Dorr of Chatham, New York, at the age of twenty-two. The two lived in Ghent, New York for ten years after their marriage³. During this time, Julia began her public literary career. Her first notable publication came when she won one of ten one-hundred dollar prizes offered by *Sartain's Union Magazine* in 1848 for her story *Isabelle Leslie*. From that point on, it seemed Julia's pen was never left idle. In 1854, Dorr published her first novel, *Farmingdale*, under the nom de plume of Caroline Thomas. Two years later, Dorr published her second novel, *Lanmere*, but this time, under her own name. With her writing career on the rise, the Dorrns were planning to head westwards in 1857, yet on a visit to Rutland that very year, the couple opted to move to Julia's childhood state instead. There, the Dorrns built "the Maples", the famed estate where Dorr would live out the remainder of her days.

² Cullina, Dr. James. "Rutland Historical Society Quarterly, Volume IV No. 3", 1974.

³ Dorr, James Byron. "Some Branches of the Dorr Family Tree", pg. 5-6.



Sartain's Union Magazine circa 1850

Settled in Vermont, Julia's literary life began to take shape on a local and national level. Julia was gaining great acclaim for her works from both readers and fellow writers. Her reputation amongst her contemporaries was that of an artist reviving a dying traditional form and a preserver of a poetic voice that was all too rare, especially (as many of her male counterparts said) "for a woman". In 1869, Dorr published her first novel penned in Vermont, *Sybil Huntington*, and in 1872 published her first volume of poems, *Expiation*. In the 1870s, the focus of Julia's publications shifted to mostly poetry.

From 1871 to 1872, Dorr produced three books of poems. While her short stories and novels had been fairly well received, it was her poetry that garnered the attention and respect of her fellow writers and



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The Maples

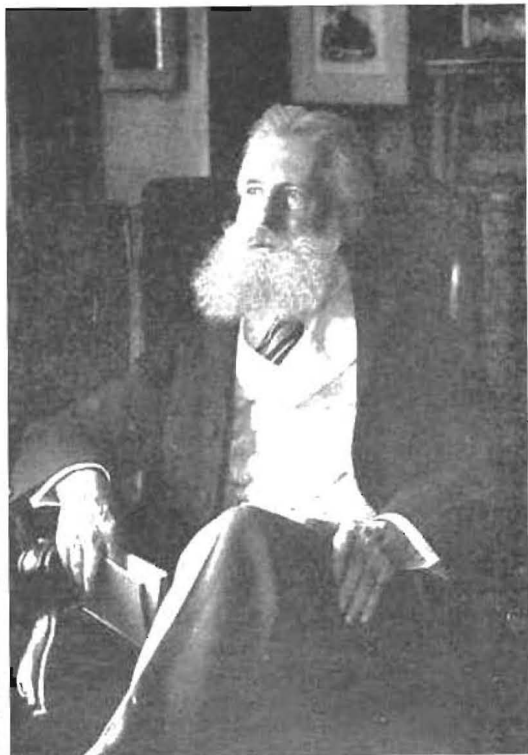
it remains her primary claim to fame. Dorr would continue to write and publish poetry up until a few months before her death on January 18th, 1913. In 1884, Seneca Milo Dorr left Julia a widow; an event which spurned a new agenda for the writer's career. Dorr spent the later 1880s and 1890s traveling and writing travelogues such as *Bermuda*, published in 1884, and *The Flowers of England's Face*, which was accompanied by Julia's personal journal of pressed flowers from her tour of the United Kingdom. These travelogues would prove to be some of Dorr's last works of substantial length.

Dorr in the Writers' Realm

Julia had several friendships with literary powerhouses of the day, including such notable figures as Ralph Waldo Emerson (with whom she maintained a multi-year correspondence) and Dr. Oliver Wendell Holmes. Holmes was a prominent writer and one of the founders of *The Atlantic Monthly* (later, simply *The Atlantic*) in 1857 along with Emerson and Harriet Beecher Stowe amongst others. The doctor-cum-writer was a great admirer of Dorr's work, or rather, of Dorr herself, and the two took up a regular correspondence. Holmes spoke only the highest of Dorr and her work, informing Julia upon one of her many visits to his home in Boston that "You are not only one of the few women who write really well, but I like you! I like your face and your voice and your ways. It makes me feel better and happier to see you!". Indeed, it seems it was not only the quality of Dorr's work that won her acclaim, but also her charm. This popularity paid off with a deep-rooted connection to the publishers of *The Atlantic Monthly*, who welcomed her literary submissions. This relationship between Dorr and the publishers, or more specifically, between Dorr and Holmes, would last a lifetime and would perhaps be highlighted in Dorr's personalized invitation from the publishers to Dr. Holmes's seventieth birthday party.

Julia would also strike up a friendship with Edmund Clarence Stedman, with whom she would correspond for more than thirty years. Stedman had come from a similarly wealthy family as Dorr, but when his father died, Stedman and his young siblings were left to fend for themselves. In his youth, Stedman had turned to story and essay writing as a means of gaining income for his family. As an adult, Stedman maintained a flourishing literary career and, in 1904, was one of the seven people in the country to be selected for membership to the American Academy for Arts and Letters. Stedman held a great appreciation for Julia's work and commended her revival of traditional poetic form. Although it is unclear as to whether or not Dorr shared his distress, the Vermont poet was sympathetic to Stedman's concerns about the oncoming death of literary culture. This concern is expressed in a letter circa 1877, in which Stedman claims "Our people really don't care about poetry, i.e. good poetry. They like the domestic and sentimental verse well enough, but altogether prefer to read novels...". While Dorr herself was also a well-received novelist in addition to being a nationally renowned

poet, it is likely she did not replicate Stedman's condemnation of the novel. However, Julia did reciprocate the desire to revive literary culture. To this, Rutland owes the beginnings of its artistic renaissance⁴.



WIKIPEDIA COMMONS

left: Oliver Wendell Holmes circa 1880
right: Edmund Clarence Stedman circa 1903

⁴ Gilchrist, Beth Bradford. "Letters to Julia C.R. Dorr".

Dorr in Rutland

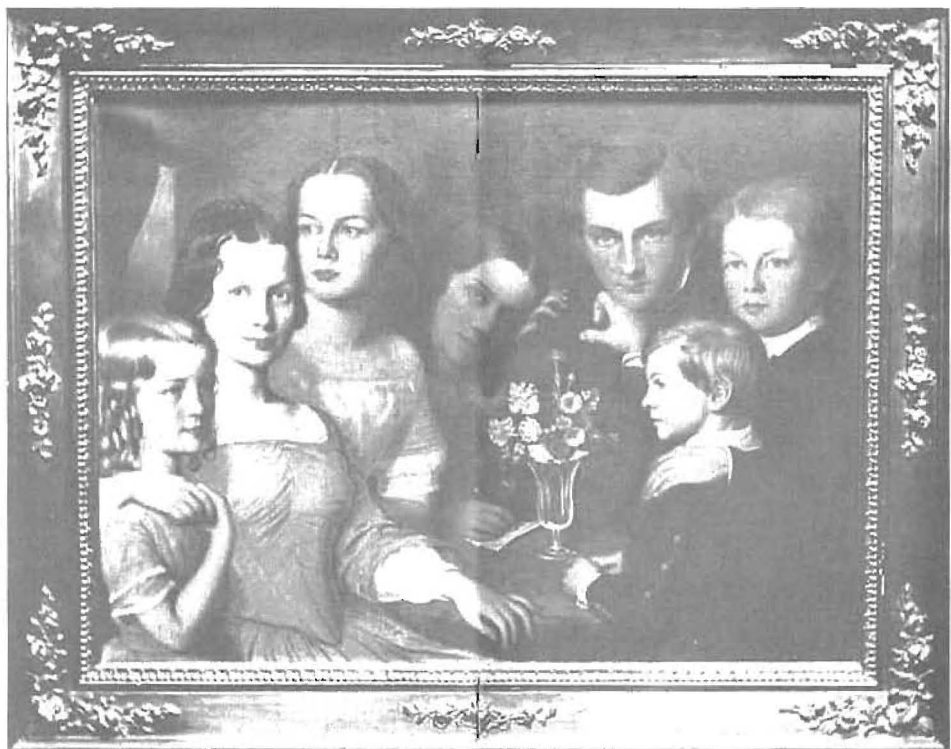
Like her father before her, Julia became a prominent member of Rutland society. She was a champion of the Rutland Free Library Association and was their first president. She organized the "Friends in Council" club in 1877, which acted as a social club for women wishing to enrich their lives by exploring literary subjects and partaking in academic debates. Julia ran club meetings in her own home for two years until the onset of "The Fortnightly Club". This group, spearheaded by Dorr alongside members of the Rutland Congregational Church, was a similar to its predecessor in that its purpose was to enrich the lives of local women (specifically the female members of the church) through literary work and intellectual conversations which were held, as the name might suggest, every two weeks. "The Fortnightly Club" became a staple of the Rutland art scene and would attract many other writing women with time (in fact, the club is still active today and continues to meet at the Congregational Church)⁵.

Indeed, Dorr's work as a writer and involvement in her community solidified her place in Vermont's history. Her life bears a tone reminiscent of her work; something dictated by astute observation, introspection, and a lofty air that leaves us with an image of a woman who seems more a literary character than an actual person. Between her renowned regality and her devotion to her craft, Julia C.R. Dorr's legacy is that of Rutland's literary matron.

⁵ Austin, Michael. "Rutland Historical Society Quarterly Volume 18 No. 2", 1988



Julia C.R. Dorr circa 1890



A portrait of William Young Ripley's children. From left to right: Agnes Warren, Julia Caroline, Mary Jane, Helen Jane, William Young Warren, Charles Henry, and Edward Hastings



Julia C.R. Dorr's bedroom in the Maples, showing her desk.

MRS. JULIA C. R. DORR DEAD.

Poet and Author Was a Contemporary of Holmes and Emerson.

RUTLAND, Vt., Jan. 18.—Mrs. Julia Caroline Ripley Dorr, poet and author, a contemporary of Holmes, Longfellow, Emerson, and Lowell, died at her home here to-day, aged 87.

Mrs. Dorr was born in Charleston, S. C., Feb. 13, 1825, the daughter of William Young Ripley. Her mother died while Mrs. Dorr was still a child, and in 1830 her father took her to Vermont, where she received her education. From her earliest years Mrs. Dorr was accustomed to write poetry, but no poem was ever published until two years after her marriage. She was married in 1847 to Seneca M. Dorr, a prominent lawyer and banker of New York.

After her marriage Mrs. Dorr contributed to the magazines, chiefly poems, with an occasional short story. Her first book venture was a novel called "Farmingdale," published in 1854 under the nom de plume of Caroline Thomas. This was followed by "Lanmere," "Sybil Huntington," and a volume of poems called "Explanation," all published under her own name. Altogether she published more than fifteen volumes of poems.

Mrs. Dorr numbered among her friends such writers as Emerson, Holmes, Lowell, Julia Ward Howe, and the late Richard Watson Gilder. With Dr. Holmes Mrs. Dorr carried on a correspondence for more than twenty years.

Mrs. Dorr had spent the greater part of her life at her home, The Maples, in Rutland, making only an occasional visit to the home of her daughter, Mrs. Zulma Delacey Steele of Flatbush, Brooklyn.

Julia C.R. Dorr's obituary from The New York times circa 1913.

Edith Kellogg Dunton

Early Life and Career Before Writing

Edith was born on December 28th, 1875 in Rutland, Vermont to Judge Walter Chipman Dunton and Miriam Barrett Dunton. She would live out her childhood and early education in Rutland, living at 15 Washington Street until her departure for Smith College in 1893⁶. There, Edith flourished as a student, editor of the school's *Monthly* publication, and gaining experience that would prove her greatest inspiration for her later works. After graduating in 1897, Edith was active in Smith Alumnae publications and network⁷. Her involvement at Smith would remain prominent for many years, as she helped establish a summer nursing school at the college in the midst of World War One to aid soldiers. After the war, Edith was crucial in founding Smith's "Farming and Shares", a program that sent workers to rural France to rebuild. Right out of college, Edith returned to Vermont to start work at Rutland High School as an English teacher⁸. She taught there until 1899, when she returned to college to pursue her master's degree.



EDITH DUNTON was famed during her Freshman and Sophomore years for her choice of boarding places. She was a keen observer of human nature, especially among the faculty, and displayed a truly prophetic insight in the matter of preparing lessons. She was eminent in Whately debates, energetic on the *Monthly* board, and deserving of much credit for the number of "mute inglorious Miltons" she discovered in the required themes classes.

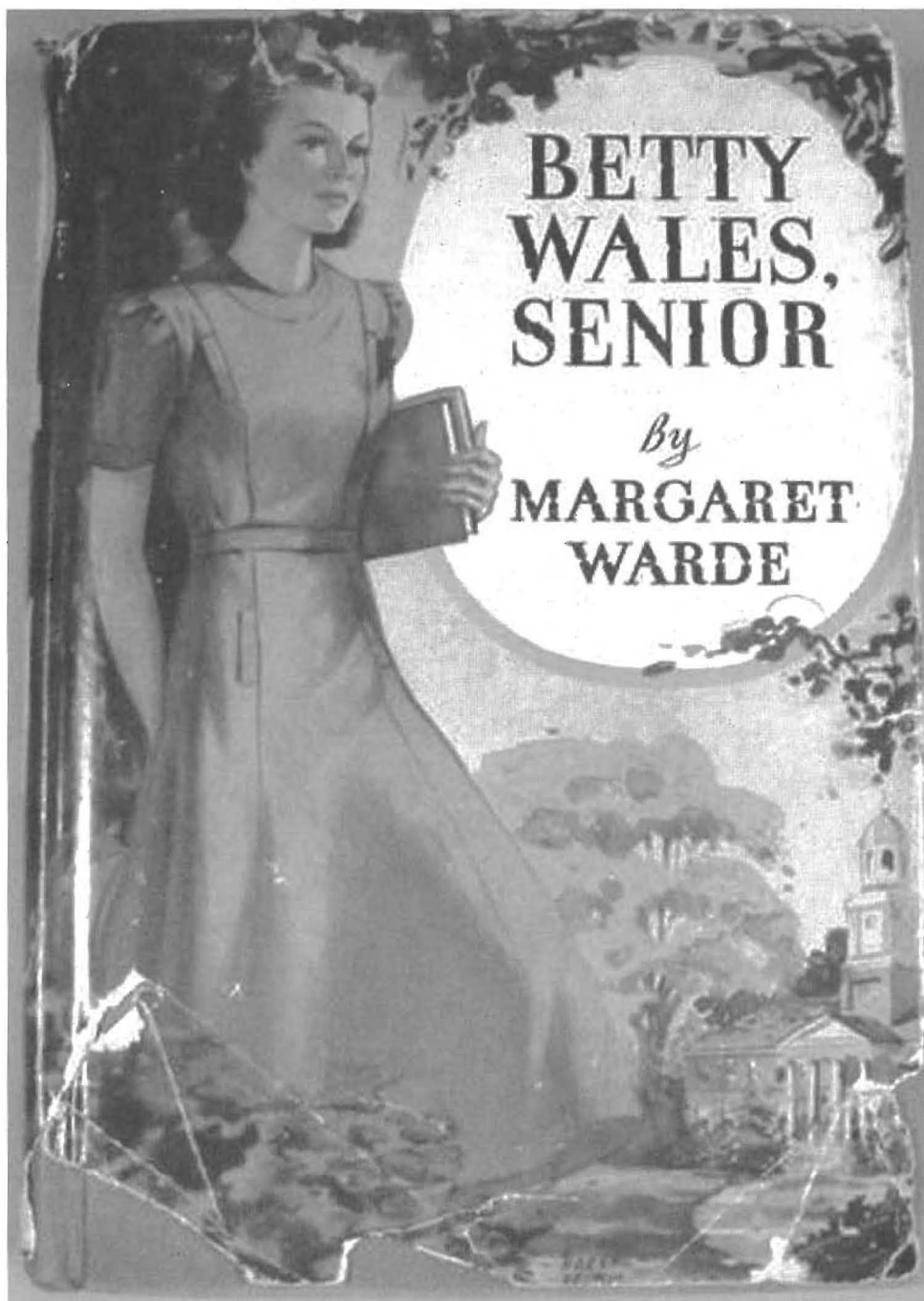
SMITH COLLEGE ARCHIVES

Senior photo of Dunton in the 1893 Smith College Yearbook

⁶ Ranftle, Carolynn. "Historically Speaking Episode 147—Rutland Women in History", 2016.

⁷ Smith College Yearbook, 1897.

⁸ *Rutland Herald*. June 17th-18th, 1898.



Cover of "Betty Wales, Senior" circa 1907

Literary Works

In 1904, Edith Kellogg Dunton published her first novel, *Betty Wales: Freshman*, under the pen name Margaret Warde. This book was a huge success and would spawn a series from Dunton about its titular character as she navigated her freshman through senior years of college at the fictional, all-women's institution "Harding College". Dunton's experiences at Smith, no doubt, held great influence over her *Betty Wales* college tales. Although one cannot determine what pieces of fiction were inspired by facts from the author's life, Harding bears several similarities to Smith (i.e. being an all-women's college, having a residential hall called Chapin, etc). *Betty Wales* was no stranger to pomp and circumstance, but nonetheless, Dunton's characters span a variety of archetypes and all seem to encourage the reader to find their own place at Harding. As Betty is told in the first book, "Every girl has her own reasons for liking college—but every nice girl likes it"⁹.

Edith would pen and publish nine novels and one play starring Betty Wales. Towards the end of the series, Dunton would go on to publish several more books surrounding a new heroine, Nancy Lee, and would later write a second play, "*Is Your Name Smith?*" in 1921. Beyond these works, Dunton was also frequently printed in children's magazines. All of these works she wrote under the name Margaret Warde (save "*Is Your Name Smith?*"). Dunton greatly enjoyed the secrecy involved in her profession, reveling over being a nationally renowned novelist whilst keeping her true identity a secret on a local level. Yet, this charade was not long-lived. In 1911, Dunton revealed her identity to the Booksellers' League in New York City and subsequently, the nation. Once a year, the Booksellers' League held a "Ladies Night". During this annual event, the association opened its doors to women of the writing world to join their male counterparts during their regular, monthly meeting. There, Dunton was invited to share her work by the association's president and was introduced by both her given name and pseudonym. Edith would continue to use the nom de plume for the vast majority of her future publications¹⁰.

⁹ Warde, Margaret. "Betty Wales: Freshman", pg. 11.

¹⁰ Chapman, Edwin. "Ladies Night at the Booksellers' League", *The Book-seller, Newsdealer and Stationer*, vol. XXXIV, March 1st, 1911.

In addition to her novels and plays, Dunton was also a prolific publisher of short stories, especially for children's magazines. Below is the first paragraph of a preliminary draft for Dunton's story, *A Dog for Dog Days*. The paragraph reads:

"I couldn't imagine what August is for" Timmy told Aunt Lu, "except to get nice and warm" (Timmy was born in Cuba, you see, and the hotter the weather, the better he liked it), "So I asked the lawn-mow man" "and he says it's for dog days. Uh, Aunt Lu, couldn't we get a nice little dog for dog days? I know you think dogs are bothers, but couldn't we bother, just for dog days?"¹¹

Timmy's Dog Day.

RUTLAND HISTORICAL SOCIETY

"I couldn't imagine what August is for,"
Timmy told Aunt Lu, "except to get ~~hot~~
nice and warm." (Timmy was born in
Cuba, you see, and the hotter the weather,
the better he liked it). "So I asked
the lawn-mow man," ^{wasn't Timmy?} "and he says
it's for dog days. Uh, Aunt Lu, couldn't
we get a nice little dog for dog
days? I know you think dogs are
bothers, but couldn't we bother, just
for dog days?"

¹¹ Dunton's draft courtesy of RHS.

BOYS AND GIRLS

FOR THOSE TEN YEARS OF AGE AND UNDER

VOL. XVII, No. 7

NASHVILLE, TENN., AUGUST, 1925

PART 2, AUGUST 9

A Dog for Dog Days

BY MARGARET WARDE



"AUNT LU, is August for dog days?" asked Timmy. "The lawn mow man says so."

"Why, yes," said Aunt Lu, "but"—She was going to explain that dog days belong not to real dogs, but to the dog star; but Timmy, shrieking "O, goody!" for

no apparent reason, had vanished.

It was past supper time when, very tired and hot, he got back. "I've found my dog for dog days and brought him home on a string," he announced. "He didn't always want to come, but a nice man helped me."

Tied to the piazza post, where the nice man had left him, was a dog. You couldn't even guess his breed; he was just dog!

"Where did you get—that?" demanded Aunt Lu.

"From Miss Electa Appleby," explained Timmy. "She went off on the train, and if she isn't back after dog days she said to give him to another boy." Smiling contentedly up at Aunt Lu, Timmy stooped to pat his dog.

"Be careful!" she warned. "He might snap."

"He isn't cross," declared Timmy. "The nice man said he's 'most too friendly. He likes everybody, so he doesn't stay at home very well. But the man thinks he'll stay with us. He says he guesses Miss Electa wasn't used to dogs' appetites."

"I should imagine not!" sniffed Aunt Lu. "We'll give him a real supper. But, Timmy, we can't have a dog around here."

"But you said so!" wailed Timmy. "You said August was for dog days, so

I s'posed of course I could have a dog for dog days and then not have him any more!"

"O, dear!" sighed Aunt Lu. In her heart she knew that every boy ought to have a dog. And Miss Electa had gone away, and nobody wanted a mongrel, and Timmy looked so woe-begone! "O, well!" said Aunt Lu. "If I let you keep him for August, you mustn't tease to have him longer."

"No, sir!" promised Timmy.

Miss Electa had named her dog Rover because he was a runaway, and Rover was a good name for the dog that followed Timmy that summer. For Timmy roamed the fields and woods all day. Aunt Lu never worried. All the village boys did the same, and nothing ever happened to them worse than torn clothes and wet feet.

But one day Timmy didn't come to dinner. Aunt Lu telephoned around, but nobody had seen him. Finally, trying not to worry, she ate her dinner alone. But when it was two o'clock and three and nearly four, she began to be thoroughly frightened. She was standing on the porch, watching for Timmy and thinking what to do, when, tearing up the road like a whirlwind, came that tan dog, Rover. All mud and briars, he jumped right up on Aunt Lu, and how he barked! He had something important to tell her.

"What do you want, Rover? Where's master? Where is Timmy?" cried Aunt Lu.

Rover barked louder than ever and ran back up the road, across two swampy fields, and into the woods, with

(5)



"A Dog for Dog Days" as it appeared in
"Boys and Girls Magazine" circa 1925.

Dunton in Rutland

Edith was a reserved woman and her presence as a writer in Rutland was a fairly understated one. In the 1920s, a temporary assistant librarian at the Rutland Free Library named Dottie wrote frequent letters to her friend Alice (nicknamed "Kitty"), who lived in Wilmette, Illinois. Dottie encountered Rutland writers on several occasions and in one of her letters, she writes of her experience with Edith Kellogg Dunton:

"I made a startling discovery Wednesday evening. I had the pleasure & honor of waiting on the author of the Betty Wales books. I don't know whether their popularity has reached Wilmette or not but they are a series of college stories—about seven—I guess and written by Margaret Warde. Just when someone asked for....Miss Dunton's [books], I decided it must be the Rutland Miss Dunton, and I had heard that she wrote & I was some surprised on looking up under Dunton to find the Betty Wales books & that Margaret Warde was just a pen name and I always [thought] Miss Dunton a rather mild old maid -she certainly wouldn't remind you of Betty Wales"¹².

Although Dottie was only in Rutland for a short while (until her ailing father become well enough for travel home) and did not know Dunton well, this description assures us that while Dunton's books were well-known on a national scale, she was by no means a local celebrity. Furthermore, there is no evidence that Dunton held any especial acclaim in the local writing community. She was not a member of the Fortnightly Club and did not seem to have much contact with her local literary contemporaries, i.e. Dorr and Gilchrist. Indeed, while Dunton did not make the social impression of many of her peers, she was by no means a lesser writer. Her prolific nature would lend itself nicely to expanding the *Betty Wales* franchise.

Betty Wales: Businesswoman

In 1917, Edith Kellogg Dunton published *Betty Wales: Business-woman*, in which a now grown and graduated Betty Wales moves to New York City alongside several of her friends to learn the dress-making trade. A little after the release of the novel, the Goldman Costume Com-

¹² "Dottie Letters", RHS, 1920.

pany began its line of Betty Wales dresses. These dresses took on the Betty Wales name as their trademark and when one purchased one of the dresses, it came with a voucher so that the costumer could acquire a free copy of a Betty Wales book at their local bookstore. With the increasing popularity of the book and dress franchise, the Goldman Costume Company expanded their array of Betty Wales-related services, including themed birthday parties and Betty Wales giveaways. The brand became a national and international (primarily in Canada) sensation as more companies adopted the Betty Wales name and trademark¹³.

Although it is unclear how connected Dunton was to the Betty Wales Dress franchise, she must have given intellectual property rights to the companies and benefitted greatly from the advertisement the dress-production provided for her books.

While Betty Wales dresses are no longer in circulation, the dresses can still be found and purchased as vintage items. *Betty Wales: Businesswoman* would be the last Betty Wales book written by Dunton, who passed away in 1944. She was buried in Evergreen Cemetery in Rutland nearby fellow Rutland writer, Julia C.R. Dorr.



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Photo of Dunton featured in her obituary. She passed away at the age of 69.

¹³ Ranftle.



Betty Wales Dresses

(For Women and Girls)

"Helen was a picture!"

I RAN in to see her quite early this morning and found her wearing the sweetest little plaid dress. Really she looked as if she had just come out of a handkerchief. I couldn't help asking her who made her dresses.

"It seems that all of Helen's trousseau, even her wedding gown, came from the store that sells Betty Wales Dresses."

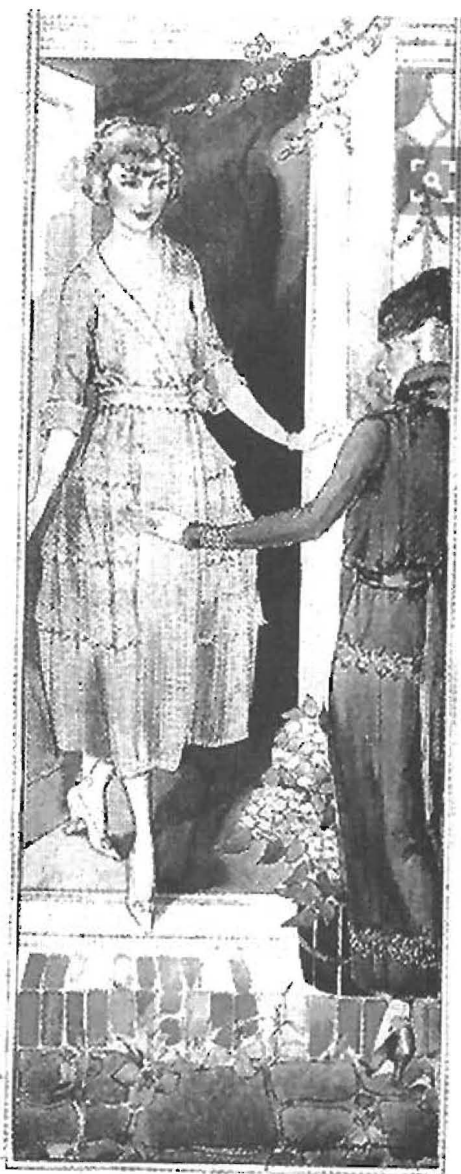
"She tells me that Betty Wales Dresses are ready-to-wear, and that they include designs and ideas for women as well as girls."

"Right after luncheon I am going downtown to look over the Betty Wales models. They are so smart and youthful that I cannot resist them."

Betty Wales Dresses are sold by only one dealer in each locality. Each dress is absolutely guaranteed.

Mail Order: 14 to 20; Women's Sizes: 34 to 44.

Betty Wales Dressmaker
191 Walnut Building New York City



(above) Advertisement
for Betty Wales dresses.

(right) Trademark of
Betty Wales dresses -
the signature Plosh-kin
doll.



Betty Wales

Beth Bradford Gilchrist

Early Life and *The Life of Mary Lyon*



Gilchrist circa 1902

Beth Bradford Gilchrist was born in Rutland on April 14th, 1879 to parents Martha Elizabeth Earl Bradford and Dr. Oscar James Gilchrist. She spent her youth in Rutland, living in her family home at 79 Center Street. Gilchrist attended the local Rutland public schools through high school (in fact, Edith Kellogg Dunton was her English teacher for the last two years of her high school career). On June 17th 1898, Gilchrist graduated from RHS as senior class president with "unclassified honors" alongside Dunton's own daughter. From there, Gilchrist was enrolled in the Mount Holyoke College class of 1902¹⁴. Several of Beth's relatives had attended Holyoke, including her mother who graduated in 1869 and two aunts who were both members of the class

of 1871, although only one graduated. Eight years after earning her undergraduate degree, Beth published her first book, *The Life of Mary Lyon*, in 1910. The biography of Mount Holyoke's founder earned Gilchrist acclaim not only as a writer, but also as a historian. In 1937, Gilchrist would be one of fourteen Mount Holyoke alumnae to receive the college's Medal of Honor for her work. The medal was "...awarded by the Mount Holyoke Alumnae Association for the eminent service in promoting the effectiveness of the alumnae association, for signal service in completing definite projects by the college, or for other noteworthy services which strengthen the position of the college" and *The Life of Mary Lyon* certainly warranted such distinction¹⁵.

¹⁴ *Rutland Herald*. June 17th-18th, 1898.

¹⁵ "Alumnae Medal of Honor Recipients by Class", Mount Holyoke College

THE TEMPLE UNIVERSITY
PHILADELPHIA

November 9, 1909.

Miss B. B. Gilchrist,

Rutland, Vt.

Dear Madam:-

President Conwell received your letter inquiring concerning his reference to Miss Mary Lyons, and says that he has utterly forgotten the sermon and does not recall when or where it was printed, although he does recall distinctly the fact well known in Massachusetts that the Government of the State and the Legislature together gave Miss Lyons a reception at the State House.

Very truly yours,

A. Vlachos

Secretary.

No proof - B.B.G.

A letter written in response to Gilchrist's inquiries to President Conwell of Temple University (circa 1909). Beth conducted her own research for the project and made several similar inquiries in her quest for information. In the corner of this note is scrawled "No proof - B.B.G.".

By Beth
Gilchrist or The New Life Of Mary Lyon ^{in 2} ^{vol} ¹⁹⁰⁸

Mary Lyon never made ready for a biography. She was too busy building her ideas into the structure of society to make notes of what she was about. A few letters, written on busy occasions called for them, unstudied & haphazard, yellow now and worn with age, some preserved only in pieces; notes of her students and fellow teachers; fragmentary jottings for "Hall" talks; - is it much to which Miss E. seeks to disturb the dust on these papers in order to visualize an ill-paid teacher of girls?"

Back in the 50's & 60's, 2-3 records of this teacher's life were gathered for these same papers not so old then, & for the memories of many a man & woman who had known Miss Lyon herself. They, however, concentrated emphasis upon what that particular time had called forth and appreciated; - their authors were too close to the day, being indeed a part of it, too much under the spell of the woman herself, to make it possible that they shd. get the relations & proportions of countless details that must go into any permanent record of a life. The records, moreover, were addressed also to those who knew & cd. therefore fill out the lines purposely left large in the writing. But the placing of Mr. Lyon's name some yrs. ago in the Hall of Fame aroused an interest in her that at once revealed the inadequacy of existing records. Miss E. has

A page from a draft from "The Life of Mary Lyon" circa 1908 by Beth Bradford Gilchrist

Later Literary Works

While Gilchrist gained initial success as a non-fiction writer, she would go on to make a name for herself in the world of children's fiction. Much like Dunton before her, Gilchrist began writing "girl's fiction". Some of her most popular works belong to this category, including one of her longest works, *Helen Over The Wall*. Along with this novel and the *Life of Mary Lyon*, Gilchrist would pen over a dozen books and submitted dozens more of stories to children's magazines. In addition to these works, Gilchrist also wrote a "boy's fiction" series revolving around a school baseball team. This series she wrote under the pen name John Prescott Earl and in fact pre-dates her publication of "The Life of Mary Lyon". This series was comparable in popularity to Gilchrist's other works and the works of her contemporaries (including Dunton's *Betty Wales* series).

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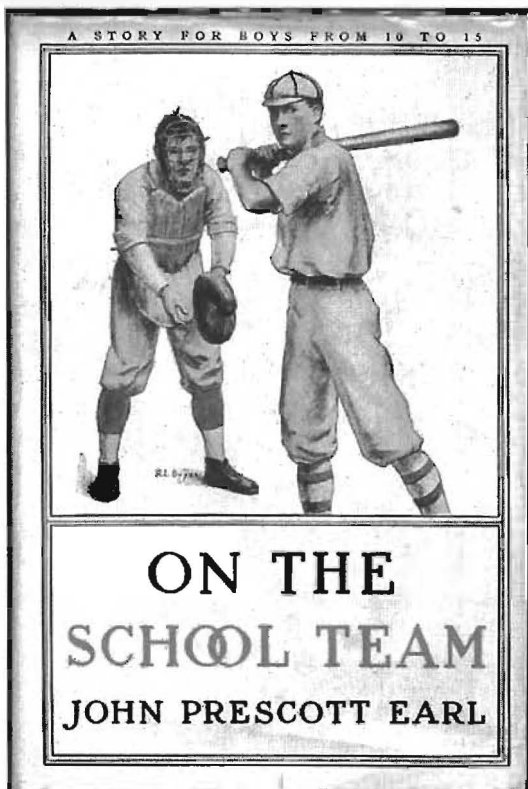
JOHN PRESCOTT EARL'S

New Story of School Life

On the School Team

A remarkable boys' story, and the first of a very unusual series dealing with football, track athletics, sturdy character and wholesome fun. Cloth binding. \$1.25.

Advert for children's literature in "The Boston Evening Post", November 28th, 1908. Margaret Warde (Edith Dunton) and John Prescott Earl (Beth Gilchrist).



(left) Cover of "On the School Team"

(below) Illustration from "On the School Team" by Ralph L. Boyer circa 1908



"AND YOU CALL THIS FAIR PLAY?"

Gilchrist in Rutland

With the exception of her work as John Prescott Earl, Gilchrist did not write under a nom de plume and was known locally for her work. Gilchrist was a prominent member of the writer's community in Rutland. She was a member of the Fortnightly Club (serving as president for twenty-five years from 1929 to 1954) and had a strong relationship with her literary mentor, Julia C.R. Dorr. Gilchrist served as Dorr's underling and admired the older woman's work greatly. In large part, it is thanks to Gilchrist that so many records of Dorr's correspondence with fellow writers and her involvement with the Fortnightly Club still survive (as Gilchrist made a point of preserving Julia's memory, both as the writer and woman she was in life).

Gilchrist was a widely recognized face on the streets of Rutland. The aforementioned stand-in, assistant librarian, Dottie, also encountered Gilchrist at her workplace. She wrote to her friend Kitty about this interaction:

"Do you remember the story *Cinderella's Grand-daughter* that came in the St. Nicholas? I don't believe that I've told you that the author, Beth Gilchrist, lives in Rutland and comes into the library quite often. She is rather pretty, slim, and dark, and usually wears lavender or purple"

The legacy of Gilchrist is not one easily forgotten, from her contributions to academia, to her novels and short stories, and her pivotal role in continuing the literary traditions of Rutland. Gilchrist passed away in 1957 and is buried in Evergreen Cemetery in Rutland, Vermont.

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